INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION SERVICES
NIH - TASK ORDER

RFTOP#   66   TITLE: Usability Study of NIH Calendar of Events System

A. Point of Contact Name: Anthony Revenis, Contracting Officer

> Phone: 301-402-3073   Fax: 301-435-6101
> Proposal Address: Billing Address:
> Office of Acquisition Management   Accounts Payable, OFM, NIH
>   And Policy   Bldg 31, Room B1B39
> 6011 Executive Blvd.   Bethesda, MD 20892-2045
> Suite 529S
> Rockville, MD 20852

B. PROPOSED PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE: Sixty Days from Award Date.

C. PRICING METHOD: Time and Materials

Currently available funding is limited to $23,000. If, in the opinion of your firm, this is more than enough, please provide your best estimate of the effort and amount required to complete this task. If this is not a sufficient amount, please specify how to best spend available funds, which tasks will remain undone, and the additional amounts necessary to complete the requirement.

D. PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS: Proposals should be submitted to me by e-mail. Please enter in the subject line the following text, "RFTOP#66– Proposal from (insert your firm name)." A signed task order form may be scanned and submitted electronically or submitted later by FAX.

E. RESPONSE DUE DATE: Monday July 15th at 11:00 AM (local NIH time).

C. TASK DESCRIPTION:

The OD/OCPL/Online Information Branch (OLIB) requires a usability study of the NIH Calendar of Events system (http://calendar.nih.gov/cgi-bin/calendar).

The NIH Calendar of Events acts as a focal point for NIH Employees and the general public to access information about NIH campus-wide events. Intramural scientists and other NIH organizations alert potential attendees to lectures, conferences, and special events by entering the event data on "The Yellow Sheet." The NIH Calendar of Events is known as "The Yellow Sheet" because it has, throughout its long history, been photocopied on yellow bond paper and distributed in inner office mail.

In FY1998 the Online Information Branch (OLIB) sought contractor assistance to create an online system to automate the process of creating the weekly, printed Yellow Sheet. A Web page containing the weekly events was also made available at this time.

In FY2000, the OLIB was encouraged by the Center for Information Technology (CIT) to adopt a new calendar system that offered more and better features for capturing and serving up event data. When the new product was launched online, OLIB fielded hundreds of e-mails

and phone calls about the system, some congratulatory, but most complaining about the relative complexity of the new system as compared to the FY1998 product.

In the world of software and Web development, it is common to receive complaints when a new product is launched. However, OLIB seeks to discover whether or not the complaints point to real usability issues.

1.0 Program Goals

The Goals of the NIH Calendar of Events System are:

1. to provide the NIH and its stakeholders with one central, online calendar system;

2. to provide event-sponsors with an easy way to enter events into the system;

3. to allow event sponsors to manage (modify and edit) events already in the system;

4. to provide attendees with an easy way to access information about the events they're interested in;

5. to provide the calendar administrator with an easy way to review and clear events; and

6. to make sure that these processes can be performed in an amount of time acceptable to users – in terms of both page-load speed and the number of steps involved in navigation.

2.0 Key Questions

The Key Questions to be addressed by this usability study are:

1. What is the current level of satisfaction with this calendar system? How satisfied are event-sponsors? Attendees? Calendar administrators?

2. What are the navigational "hang-ups" in the processes that must be performed using this calendar system? In what specific ways does the interface design aid or hamper task flow?

3. Do lengthy page-load times negatively impact task completion? Does page-load speed create functional bottlenecks *(e.g., loading jobs on the server)*?

4. Do site visitors have any suggestions for improving the calendar system? Are there any desirable features that were overlooked during development?

3.0 Study Design

A contractor shall be hired to conduct a series of **usability task scenarios** on the Calendar interface and provide OLIB with a prioritized list of usability problems with the system. The problems that create the most serious barrier to user performance/satisfaction shall be ranked at the top of the list.

3.1 Recruitment
The contractor will receive from OLIB a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet of Federal employees who have volunteered to participate in usability testing. This spreadsheet contains phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and appropriate times to call each individual. The contractor will screen these participants according to their use of the Calendar system. Six participants shall be chosen from four representative groups:

Employees who enter events in the calendar every day;

Employees who enter events infrequently;
Employees who use the calendar to browse events all the time; and
Employees who use the calendar to look up events once in a while.

The contractor shall be responsible for recruiting and scheduling participants for the tests. The testing session should take no more than 45 minutes.

3.2 Facilities and Equipment
The usability tests will be conducted on the NIH campus in Building 31, Room 5B58. This room is a comfortable, well-lit NIH office with a window and standard office furniture. It has been used to stage previous usability studies, and will easily accommodate the participant; moderator; a tripod and videocamera; and an observer. The office door can be locked overnight.

The contractor shall provide one videocamera, a tripod, and tapes for all testing sessions. The videocamera will be focused on the participant, rather than the mouse or the screen, in order to record body language and other nonverbal indicators of the participant's satisfaction with the Calendar system. All tapes will become the property of OLIB.

The contractor shall provide and post signage directing participants to the appropriate floor and room in Building 31. The contractor shall be available to greet each participant at the door and ask them to sign a video release, and should schedule participants to allow time for this.

3.3 Moderator's Guide
The contractor shall work closely with OLIB to prepare task scenarios and a moderator's guide including, but not limited to, the following demographic questions:

Job title;
Responsibilities with regard to the Calendar system;
Operating system of participant's computer; and
Internet browser and version.

The contractor shall administer all tests. OLIB staff may choose to observe some or all of the sessions, and may also make slight changes to the moderator's guide between sessions.

3.4 Remuneration
Federal employees who choose to take annual leave to participate in this study, in addition to those who choose to participate on their own time, will be compensated in the amount of $50. The contractor shall distribute this gift in the form of cash in an envelope handed to the participant at the conclusion of the test session.

3.5 Report and Deliverables
The contractor shall analyze the results of all sessions and prepare a final report in Microsoft Powerpoint to present to OLIB in anticipation of an informal, wrap-up discussion about the Calendar system. The contractor shall deliver all videotapes to OLIB.

4.0 Pricing

Firm rates and an hourly ceiling for each labor classification for usability testing. Pricing for the development of task scenarios should be based on labor hours subject to the overall ceiling for the task order. The $1200 total amount for participant remuneration must be included as

part of the total cost. There shall be no facilities costs included due to the fact that the tests will be held on the NIH campus.

5.0 Clearances

All studies will be conducted in accordance with OMB regulations. No clearances are required.

6.0 The contractor shall be able to perform usability testing on the NIH campus in a sensitive manner.

D. EVALUATION FACTORS

The contractor shall have experience in the following:
> Recruiting subjects from target populations
> Preparing and conducting task analysis sessions
> Administering usability tests on the NIH campus
> Recording and analyzing response data
> Preparing *brief, clear, and concise* reports and presentations from the response data

Price will be an important factor in making this award and will be evaluated in terms of the value of the services proposed for the available funding.

TO # NICS-66   **CONTRACT #263-01-D-0_____**
PART II - CONTRACTOR'S REPLY: TITLE: Usability Study of NIH Calendar of Events System

Contractor:
Points of Contact:
Phone-   Fax-
Address:

TOTAL ESTIMATED COST: Pricing Method: T&M
TOTAL ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOURS:
PROPOSED COMPLETION DATE:

FOR THE CONTRACTOR:_____
                                                    Signature   Date

_____

SOURCE SELECTION:

WE HAVE REVIEWED ALL SUBMITTED PROPOSALS HAVE DETERMINED THIS FIRM
SUBMITTED THE BEST OVERALL PROPOSAL AND THE PRICE/COST IS REASONABLE.

Billing Reference # _____
Appropriations Data: _____
    (ATTACH OBLIGATING DOCUMENT IF AN ROC WILL NOT BE USED.)

RECOMMENDED: _____
        FAX #   Signature - Project Officer   Date

APPROVED:_____ _____
        FAX #   Signature - Contracting Officer   Date

NLM APPROVAL -

CONTRACTOR SHALL NOT EXCEED THE TASK ORDER AMOUNT WITHOUT THE WRITTEN APPROVAL OF THE
CONTRACTING OFFICER & ICS COORDINATOR

APPROVED:_____
            Signature –Anthony M. Revenis, J.D., NIH-PICS Coordinator   Date